

Washington, DC - A congressional report analyzing the local impact of proposed Republican changes to Head Start was commissioned at the request of 13 Los Angeles area members of Congress. Under the new Republican reauthorization plan, sweeping changes could drastically undermine the program's broad mission of comprehensive children's services. The School Readiness Act of 2003, H.R. 2210 is expected to go to the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives sometime this week.

"According to this report there are approximately 33,300 children enrolled in 470 Head Start programs in Los Angeles. By changing the current funding mechanism from federal grants to state controlled block grants, there will be less money going into services," said Congresswoman Linda Sánchez.

The proposal before Congress would turn Head Start into a "block grant" in some states, potentially causing the reduction or elimination of the comprehensive services that are provided to children in Los Angeles in Head Start. Head Start meets children's needs through a holistic approach that includes pre-school classes, concentrated parental involvement, and comprehensive medical and social services.

"It is critical to keep Head Start funded at the federal level, especially during these times of state budget deficits. These potential changes could dramatically undermine the overall mission of Head Start and ultimately serve fewer children," said Congresswoman Linda Sánchez

Other items included in the study are:

- In Los Angeles, 94% of Head Start children are living in families that receive federal assistance or have incomes below the federal poverty line, yet 87% of Head Start children are receiving primary health care.
- The program has provided services to over 20 million children since its inception in 1965. Currently, over 900,000 children are enrolled nationwide.
- The program has provided mental health services to over 3,700 children in Los Angeles and has assisted over 4,100 children with disabilities.
- Head Start children are less likely to repeat a grade, require special education, or be convicted of a crime.

"We need to conscientiously invest in our country's future. This program is the primary source of early education for many hard working families. All families want and deserve the best early childhood education for their children and Head Start lays the foundation for future academic success," said Congresswoman Linda Sánchez.